



# Colorado News



## Recent Success

### Seventeen Potential Trail Network Links Considered for Initial Funding

Mesa County Trails has recommended that seventeen potential trail network links be more extensively evaluated for inclusion in a Great Outdoors Legacy Grant proposal. With the assistance of RTCA staff, Mesa County trails has inventoried 3,343 miles of existing trails and identified 54 potential linkages totaling 357 miles that will pull together existing trails into a comprehensive county-wide network. The seventeen links being further evaluated enjoy county-wide interagency and partner support as the most critical links to serve as the foundation for the overall network.



Photo by Chris Herman, COPWOBA

The Mesa County trails network will link population centers with a wide variety of trails on public lands throughout the county.

### New Preservation Priorities and Funding for the Gold Belt Tour

The Gold Belt Tour National Scenic Byway, with the assistance of RTCA staff, now has a plan that reflects the culmination of years of thought and achievement, with the intent of providing a blueprint for future actions to protect the wealth of cultural, recreational, natural and scenic heritage and open landscapes. It will soon be adopted by the Gold Belt Board of Directors and supported by local partners, the Gold Belt Tour organization is applying for funds for priority projects, initiating new relationships and working with local groups and government agencies to move forward on future actions. RTCA helped the Gold Belt Tour obtain a National Park Service Challenge Cost Share Program grant. In partnership with the Four Mile Farmers Club, Teller County, Cañon City Parks and Recreation District and School District, Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Bureau of Land Management, the grant will help fund interpretive and informational panels and educational brochures and workbooks for school children about wildlife, outdoor recreation and the rich ranching and farming heritage along the Gold Belt.

### RTCA PROGRAM

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate. By investing in the protection of special places, recreation, tourism, and well planned development, local leaders can bring long-lasting economic and quality of life benefits to their communities.

"The work that RTCA is doing to facilitate the development of a Mesa County Trails Plan is really a key part of the overall effort to forge closer relationships between Colorado National Monument and the local community."

--Bruce Noble, Superintendent Colorado NM

# Recent Success (continued)

## Share the Road Signs Installed on Prairie Horizons Trail

In the summer of 2006, RTCA and local project partners worked with the Colorado Department of Transportation to have Share the Road signs installed along a 140 mile segment of the on-highway Prairie Horizons Trail (PHT) in Kiowa, Crowley, and Pueblo Counties in eastern Colorado. The PHT is a segment of the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail (TABT) which crosses the United States from Oregon to Virginia. Along with the Share the Road signs, the RTCA and the PHT group obtained funding to make supplemental signs to include the PHT logo on the Share the Road sign posts which has made a great difference in identification of the trail and making

cyclists feel welcome on the trail. The Prairie Horizons Trail working group is working on a number of things to improve the experience for cyclists. The biggest concern is the narrow width of shoulders (or lack of shoulders) on Colorado State Highway 96. Widening the shoulders is a long-term project goal, but in the meantime cyclists are contending with large grain and cattle trucks, more traffic than was present when this corridor was designated part of the TABT, and motorists who are often insensitive and sometimes aggressive toward cyclists. One of the group's major motivations in pursuing the signs was to let people know that cyclists are an accepted and welcome part of the landscape and motorists have a responsibility toward shared safety.



Share the Road signs installed along Prairie Horizons Trail in Eastern Colorado.

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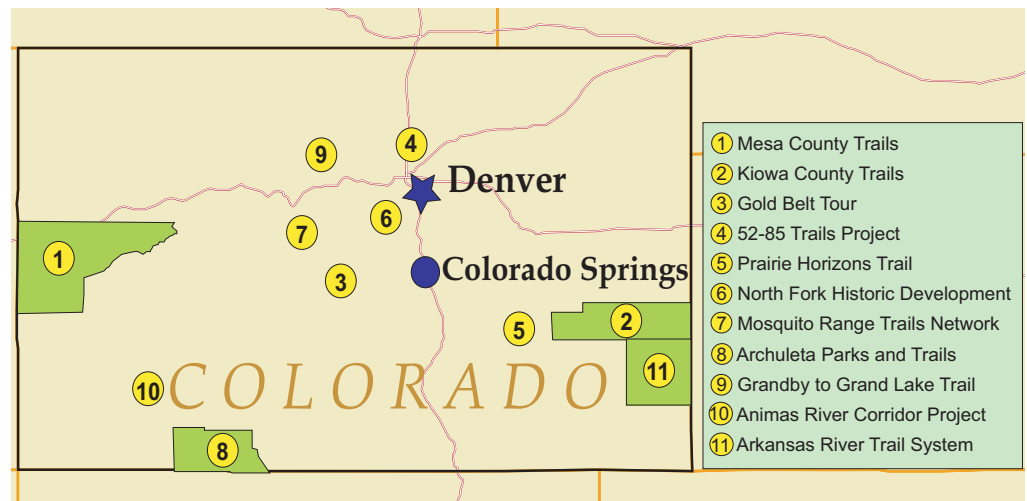
## 1. Mesa County Trails

**Project Goal:** Creation of a trails network linking communities in the county together as well as linking them with trails on surrounding public lands.  
**RTCA Role:** RTCA staff provides facilitation assistance to the 30 plus partners working together to create a county trail network, facilitates the development of an inventory of all existing trails in the county and assists with development of the trail plan.

*NPS Contact: Duane Holmes*

*Partner: Colorado Riverfront*

*Commission and Mesa County*



## 2. Kiowa County Trails

**Project Goal:** Kiowa County in southeastern Colorado is on the verge of receiving thousands of visitors per year to the area due to the newly established Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. The county would like to offer visitors an opportunity to experience its long and unique history and the landscape within which its history is embedded by providing trails and routes that highlight

some significant natural and cultural resources.

**RTCA Role:** RTCA will assist the community in planning a county-wide system of trails and routes linking cultural and natural resources and that provides recreational and interpretive opportunities for county residents and visitors.

*NPS Contact: Joy Lujan*

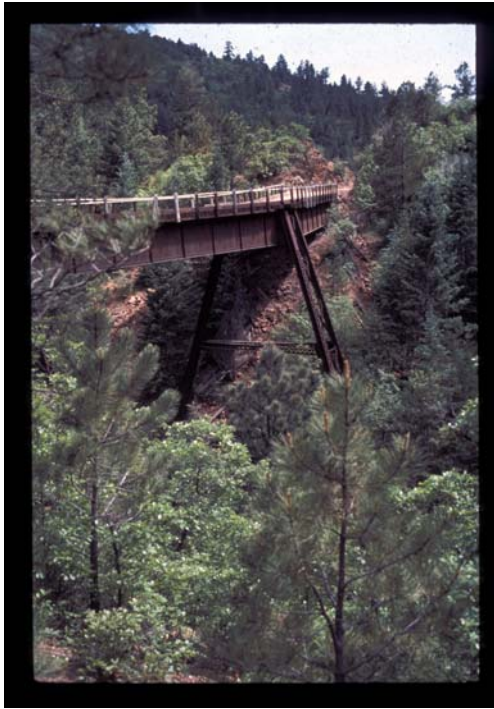
*Partner: Kiowa County Historic Preservation Commission*

### NPS-RTCA Contact Information

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Steel bridge in Phantom Canyon along the Gold Belt Tour.

## 3. Gold Belt Tour: Open Landscapes Protection

**Project Goal:** The Gold Belt Tour, a 131-mile circuit tour, retraces the historic travel routes leading to North America's greatest gold camps. The importance of the visual resources is unmistakable, the ranching and agriculture heritage along the Gold Belt Tour is significant, and the route provides a diversity of recreation opportunities and experiences. The project goal is to encourage the retention of open space and heritage landscapes surrounding the communities to include rural ranch land, public lands, historic and modern mining technology and other businesses and industry. The urgency of this goal grows each year as population growth along the Front Range continues to impact open space and other facets of the heritage landscape.

**RTCA Role:** RTCA will continue to support the partnership and complete the plan that establishes heritage landscape and open space preservation priorities and ensures that the integrity of the byway region is maintained.

*NPS Contact: Kay Salazar*

*Partner: Gold Belt Tour Scenic and Historic Byway Association*

## 4. 52-85 Trails Project

**Project Goal:** This RTCA led effort will result in a regional trail masterplan featuring nearly fifty miles of trail that incorporates the unique scenic, cultural, natural, and historic resources of the area. RTCA will continue to work with the 52-85 group to coordinate the efforts of each of the involved municipalities, layout and facilitate the planning process, work toward a shared vision and goals, and ultimately complete a broadly supported trails masterplan for this regional segment of a statewide trail network.

**RTCA Role:** The 52-85 Trails Project is a component of the Colorado Front Range Trail (CFRT), an effort by Colorado State Parks to create a multi-purpose trail from Wyoming to New Mexico along the Front Range of Colorado. RTCA is assisting five communities in two counties in creating a collaborative regional trails masterplan for this section of the CFRT in northern Colorado.

*NPS Contact: Joy Lujan*

*Partner: City of Dacono*

## 5. Prairie Horizons Trail

**Project Goal:** The TransAmerica Bicycle Trail crosses the United States from Astoria, OR to Yorktown, VA. It passes through eastern Colorado on more than 140 miles of CO Highway 96. Thirteen eastern Colorado communities and three counties are working with RTCA, Kiowa County Economic Development Foundation, and the Colorado Department of Transportation to develop a plan for the trail corridor in eastern Colorado which has been named the Prairie Horizons Trail. The group is working to create a welcoming atmosphere and safer environment for cyclists in the region by improving the trail and providing necessary amenities and information in order to enhance opportunities to experience this area's unique prairie environment.

**RTCA Role:** The group's goal is to improve approximately 140 miles of trail and associated amenities to serve cyclists along the Prairie Horizons Trail segment of the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail as it

passes through Crowley, Kiowa, and Pueblo Counties on State Highway 96 in eastern Colorado. RTCA will continue to act as a catalyst and facilitator guiding the communities through the process of developing a plan for the enhancement of this trail section.

*NPS Contact: Joy Lujan*

*Partner: Town of Ordway*

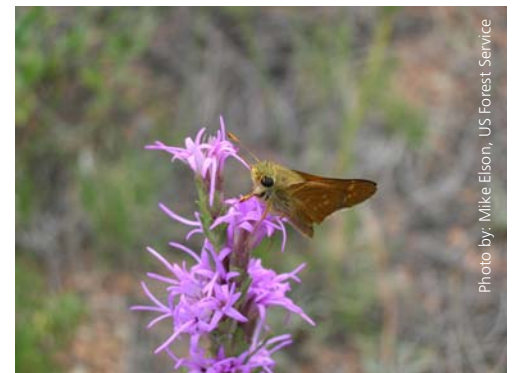
## 6. North Fork of the South Platte

**Project Goal:** Provision of a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities and conservation of outstanding natural and cultural values along the North Fork of the South Platte River in Jefferson County from Foxton to the Park County line. The area is rich in diverse natural and cultural resources.

**RTCA Role:** RTCA staff facilitated the Foxton –Pine grove project, provided expertise in public involvement and coordinated the writing of the plan.

*NPS Contact: Duane Holmes*

*Partner: Jefferson County Historical Commission*



Pawnee Montane Skipper, a federally listed threatened butterfly.

## 7. Mosquito Range Heritage Initiative Trails Network

**Project Goal:** Mosquito Range Heritage Initiative has targeted an area of approximately 112 square miles along the Continental Divide in Central Colorado. Around 37,000 acres of the Pike National Forest rise from South Park to the 14,286 foot Mount Lincoln. Public land is segmented by hundreds of patented mining claims, mill site and other private in-holdings, large-scale hard rock

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mining is increasingly less viable economically and there is a dramatic increase in second home development in the area. There are opportunities to coordinate trails planning, improve access to recreation corridors, and enhance existing trails and connections to towns and public lands.

**RTCA Role:** RTCA will help the community partner identify conservation strategies, foster partnerships, develop a conceptual trails plan and enhance a strong organization to help maintain the quality of life for local residents and enhance the visitors' experience in this spectacular mountain region.

*NPS Contact: Kay Salazar*

*Partner: Mosquito Range Heritage Initiative*

## 8. Archuleta County Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails

**Project Goal:** Mounting development and growth pressures in the county have caused some of the essential quality of life elements—parks, recreation and open space, to be overlooked. As Pagosa Springs continues to attract retirees and second homeowners, it becomes increasingly important to balance the needs and demands of the diverse population segments that make up the community. An outcome of an intensive public process was significant desire to protect undeveloped land, preserve viewsheds and establish a trails system linking important county amenities, towns and public lands. To meet the public desires and growing needs of the community, a master plan will be created to unify and expand all planning and development efforts with regard to parks, recreation, open space and trails.

**RTCA Role:** RTCA will help with planning parks, open space and trails, identifying and building partnerships, creating and facilitating a public process, and identifying funding sources for this new project.

*NPS Contact: Kay Salazar*

*Partner: Archuleta County*



Volunteers help construct a section of the Grand County Trails network.

## 9. Granby to Grand Lake Trail

**Project Goal:** The new section of trail will establish approximately 17 miles of non-motorized, multi-use trail that will connect the towns of Granby and Grand Lake and pass through a section of Rocky Mountain National Park. The County boasts over 600 miles of trail; however, very few of those miles provide opportunities for trail users who seek a more moderate, family-friendly grade. The preferred alignment of the Granby to Grand Lake Trail will give county residents and Rocky Mountain NP visitors an opportunity to enjoy the scenic and health benefits of a more accessible trail experience.

**RTCA Role:** In 1995, Grand County adopted a broadly-supported masterplan for non-motorized trails with the help of the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. The plan is known as the Grand County Headwaters Trails Master Plan and it calls for the establishment of an interconnecting system of trails throughout Grand County. Since that time, Headwaters Trail Alliance (HTA) has been working to implement that plan by constructing a number of trails between communities. RTCA is currently assisting HTA in evaluating alternatives for the next section of trail to be built.

*NPS Contact: Joy Lujan*

*Partner: Headwaters Trails Alliance*

## 10. Animas River Corridor Project

**Project Goal:** The residents of Silverton and San Juan County are working to revitalize a major reach of the Animas

River in southwestern Colorado; with the help of the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program they've moved one step closer to success. Their goal is to plan and construct a twelve-mile-long trail for non-motorized uses from Silverton to the popular Eureka townsite. This trail will parallel the existing Alpine Loop, a well-used route for motorized access along the Animas River and beyond.

**RTCA Role:** In addition to the trail planning, the RTCA program staff will assist local advocates in identifying and assessing sections of the river that have been particularly damaged by mining activities in the past and making initial recommendations for rehabilitating those areas. Implementing these goals will aid in the economic diversification of this wildly scenic County and will serve as a model for future redevelopment of the mine-scarred valley.

*NPS Contact: Hugh Osborne*

*Partner: San Juan County*

## 11. Arkansas River Trail System

**Project Goal:** The Prowers County-Arkansas River Trail System is a vision to create an inter-connected network of trails in southeastern Colorado. The anticipated results will create non-motorized recreational trails in the communities of the County and then link the communities with each other and with the nearby historic and natural resources. The trail will be found along the Arkansas River, at times on the remnants of the Santa Fe Trail. The trail will lead visitors to the Camp Amache, a relocation camp that housed over 7000 Japanese-Americans during World War II. The trail network will also provide additional access to some of the best bird-watching sites in this part of America.

**RTCA Role:** Provide the County and communities with technical expertise regarding current best practices in the fields of trail design, support facilities, and signage. RTCA staff will also play a lead role in the design and facilitation of public involvement strategies.

*NPS Contact: Hugh Osborne*

*Partner: Prowers County*